



Emergency Management **UPDATE**

July 2000

New name, same commitment to service

What's in a name? For the Virginia Department of Emergency Services (VDES), this is not merely a philosophical question but instead speaks to the very essence of who we are and what we do.

On July 1, VDES officially became the Virginia Department of Emergency Management, reflecting the growth of the emergency management profession and establishing a name distinctly different from the Virginia Department of Health's Office of Emergency Medical Services.

VDEM is headquartered in Richmond and organized around four divisions (Operations, Preparedness and Mitigation, Technological Hazards, and Recovery and Administrative Services).

The staff of approximately 75 employees works in the administrative headquarters and Virginia Emergency Operations Center in Richmond and in regional offices in Gloucester, Culpeper and Pulaski.

Reporting directly to the Secretary of Public Safety and the Governor, VDEM operates under the broad authority of Virginia Emergency Services and Disaster Laws of 1973 (as amended).



House Bill 1352, passed earlier this year in the General Assembly and approved by Governor Gilmore, formalized the name change and updates the wording of the law but does not change the agency's primary mission.

From its earliest days as the Virginia Office of Civil Defense, the agency has been on the forefront in protecting and preserving the lives of the citizens of the Commonwealth.

VDEM has been there to lend a hand through more than 20 presidentially declared disasters, assuring that the full resources of state government were available to assist citizens and localities in emergency and

disaster preparedness, response and recovery.

"While our name is changing, our focus on serving local constituents has not," says State Coordinator Michael Cline. "As VDEM continues to evolve and incorporate new technologies into our operations, we will never lose sight of the proud tradition of personal contact with our local government partners.

"From our planners to our hazmat officers and regional coordinators, to the communications technician who takes your call for assistance, every member of our team stands ready to roll up his or her sleeves and work with you to

protect and preserve lives and property in your locality.

"The way I see it, this name change simply illustrates our comprehensive approach to proactively managing emergency preparedness, response and recovery operations while recognizing the breadth of specialized skills and experience we bring to the table as emergency managers."

Though disasters can't be prevented, VDEM assists localities in preparing to face them by assisting local governments in developing emergency operations plans and conducting disaster exercises and drills to train for real events.

VDEM also provides training in emergency management, hazardous materials response and search and rescue, and works to educate citizens on preparing for emergencies and disasters through ongoing efforts such as annual hurricane, tornado and winter preparedness campaigns.

As timely communication and coordination are critical to saving lives and reducing property loss in crisis situations, the VDEM Operations Division maintains a well-equipped and staffed Virginia

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We're changing more than just our name. Our Web site has been completely redesigned and has a new address. Turn to page 4 to plug in to the latest VDEM changes.

Briefing touts merits of preparedness

By Rohn Brown, VDEM Public Affairs

Be prepared. The Boy Scout motto was the theme for the Hurricane Media Day at the Virginia Air and Space Center in Hampton on June 1.

Cosponsored by the Hampton Roads Emergency Management Committee (HREMC) and VDEM, the briefing started the beginning of hurricane season and was attended by approximately 75 local, state and media representatives.

"The government can't do it all alone," said Bruce Morris, Deputy Secretary of Public Safety. "Even if we could assign a public safety person to all men and women, it would not be enough. There is no one better prepared to prepare yourself than you, the citizens of Virginia."

"When I looked at the devastation of Floyd last year, the thing that impressed me the most was how much could have been saved with preparation."

Jerry Jarrell, the recently retired director of the National Hurricane Center, provided the keynote address and underscored the importance of planning for hurricane season.

"As meteorologists, we need to give people more time to prepare themselves. If all is ready, you can do it. But, individual preparation is key. You have to take responsibility in your own homes."

"If you've got to spend half the day in line at Home Depot buying supplies, forget it," he said.

Besides preparedness, Jarrell touched on the limitations of high-rise evacuation, the importance of disaster-resistant homes and two potentially catastrophic scenarios that could impact Hampton Roads. He also stressed the dangers of inland flooding.

"It used to be that 95 percent of the deaths in a hurricane were attributed to storm surge," Jarrell said. With improved warning systems and the public's acceptance of evacuation orders, this threat has been significantly reduced.

Jarrell referenced a study that tracked hurricane deaths from 1970 to 1998, noting that 70 percent of all the water-related fatalities were attributed to freshwater drowning and only one percent was blamed on storm surge.

The 56 lives claimed by Hurricane Floyd flooding last year occurred mostly in inland North Carolina.

"Hurricane Floyd showed the destruction of inland flooding," said Bill Sammler, Warning Coordination Meteorologist for the National Weather Service in Wakefield. "We need to tell citizens that walking or driving through flooded roadways is dangerous. If water is covering the road, turn around and find an alternate route."

"Plan for what you're going to do now. Don't wait until the hurricane warning is issued," said Steve Kopczynski, Fire Chief/Coordinator of Emergency Management of York County and HREMC chairman. "Anticipate interruptions in services from



Spotlight on severe weather. WTVR TV 6 reporter Allison Bozarth interviews Jerry Jarrell after the news briefing.

governmental agencies and private businesses. Plan on being self-sufficient for three to seven days."

Michael Cline, VDEM State Coordinator, used the opportunity to recap the Commonwealth's Hurricane Floyd response and recovery efforts and offered some lessons learned.

"Many of the Franklin and Southampton County victims of Floyd did not have flood insurance," said Cline. "Now is the time for all the citizens of Virginia to assess their risks and take appropriate action."

Jarrell's presentation can be viewed from the VDEM Web site at www.vdem.state.va.us/season.

NWS program offers community chance to be 'StormReady'

Severe weather is more likely to strike the United States than any other region in the world, the National Weather Service reports. During an average year, some 10,000 severe thunderstorms, 1,000 tornadoes and 1,000 flash floods strike throughout the U.S., inflicting billions of dollars of damage.

To encourage communities to improve local hazardous weather operations and public awareness, the NWS has launched the "StormReady" program on preparing for severe weather threats.

Begun by the NWS Forecast Office in Tulsa, Okla., the voluntary program gives communities clear-cut advice and informa-

tion from their local NWS office, state and local emergency managers and the media.

The program, now expanding nationwide, plans to make 20 communities StormReady each year for the next five years. The NWS seeks to:

- Improve the timeliness and effectiveness of local hazardous weather warnings
- Help local emergency managers win fiscal and community support for their hazardous-weather-related programs
- Increase public awareness of hazardous weather threats by certifying local governments as StormReady

StormReady sets specific standards for communications, reception of NWS

information, hydrometeorological monitoring, local warning dissemination, community preparedness, and administration.

Emergency managers seeking certification for their communities can learn more from the StormReady Web site at www.nws.noaa.gov/stormready.

Available information includes participation criteria, available publications and safety information about various types of severe weather. The Web site also provides a list of individuals to contact for further information about the program.

(Compiled from *Natural Hazards Observer*, May 2000)

VDEM vs. OEMS: What's the difference?

Emergency services, emergency management, emergency medical services. To the general public it all sounds the same. Talk to the receptionists at each agency and you will hear some of the same stories.

While the name change will not solve all the confusion between VDEM and the Virginia Department of Health's Office of Emergency Medical Services (OEMS), it does present an opportunity to look at some of the differences and similarities.

Mission

VDEM: Protect and preserve the lives and property of the citizens of Virginia from emergencies and disasters by coordinating the state's emergency preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery efforts.

OEMS: Reduce death and disability resulting from sudden or serious injury and illness in the Commonwealth through planning and development of a comprehensive, coordinated statewide emergency medical services (EMS) system; and provision of other technical assistance and support to enable the EMS community to provide the highest quality emergency medical care possible to those in need.

Organization (Department vs. Office)

VDEM's agency head, Michael Cline, reports directly to the Secretary of Public Safety. In disaster situations, he may report to the governor or his representatives.

OEMS is a unit of the Va. Department of Health. The Director, Gary Brown, reports to the Deputy Commissioner of Public Health. The Deputy Commissioner reports to the Commissioner who reports to the Secretary of Health and Human Resources.

Funding

VDEM relies on a combination of federal and state general funds to provide its programs and services. VDEM also helps to award funds from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to localities through several programs.

Funds for the **OEMS** budget are generated from motor vehicle registration fees. Two dollars from each motor vehicle, pickup, or panel truck registered in Virginia is set aside as a special fund to be used only for emergency medical purposes.

Field Services/Assistance to Localities

One of **VDEM's** primary responsibilities is working with and supporting local governments in emergency preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation. Three regional coordinators provide technical assistance and coordination services to local emergency managers. Eight hazardous materials officers work with localities and regional teams to plan for and respond to hazardous materials incidents.

Helping local governments enhance their own level of pre-hospital patient care is a high priority for the **OEMS**. Seven EMS program representatives are located in the field and provide technical assistance to EMS agencies and local governments on EMS system design and staffing issues.



Disaster Management and Response

One of **VDEM's** most visible activities is preparing for and delivering coordinated emergency/disaster response to local and state government and citizens of the Commonwealth. The agency works with local emergency management coordinators, state agencies, volunteer groups and federal agencies such as FEMA. They also manage and staff the Virginia Emergency Operations Center 24-hours a day, seven days a week.

OEMS works in conjunction with VDEM to coordinate the health and medical response to declared disasters. The OEMS Emergency Operations Director coordinates the Emergency Support Center located at the Parham Road office in Richmond.

OEMS personnel and specially trained volunteers staff the Center. OEMS oversees two coordination teams and nine EMS Disaster Task Forces who assist localities during a declared disaster or emergency.

For more comprehensive information on OEMS, its programs and services, visit their Web site at www.vdh.state.va.us/oems.

Editor's Note: VDEM Public Affairs Coordinator Rohn Brown compiled this article from his unique perspective as the former OEMS Technical Assistance Coordinator.

Starting lineup changes



Road warrior. Though he's spent a lot of time on the road in 10 years with VDEM, the diagonal move from one corner of the Trade Court headquarters to the other may be the biggest yet for Ralph Jones. Though it isn't far geographically, his new position as the Assistant State Coordinator for Operations promises to cover the most distance.

A cornerstone of VDEM since 1989, Jones has served in a variety of positions including State Disaster Response Team member, Title III Program Planner, Environmental Program Manager and, most recently, Director of the Technological Hazards Division. As of June 10, his responsibilities expanded considerably to include not only Technological Hazards but also the Preparedness and Mitigation and Operations divisions.

Jones says he has seen the 'Tech Haz' group really pull together as a team during his six years shepherding the division. He credits the exceptional success and national reputation of the hazmat program to quality people who know their jobs are important and consistently perform at an exceptionally high level. Now, he'll be looking to foster that same spirit on a larger scale.

"If our people believe that what they do is fundamentally important, then they will remain motivated and work as a team," says Jones. Though still based in Richmond, Jones expects to maintain a full travel schedule as he "reacquaints" himself with the issues facing EMS throughout the state. *(continued on page 4)*

Training Calendar

Emergency Management

EOC Management & Operations
July 11-13/Newport News

Leadership & Influence
July 18-20/Richmond

Exercise Design
July 26-27/Lynchburg

Principles of Emergency Mgmt.
August 1-3/Harrisonburg

ISC/EOC Interface
August 9-10/Fairfax

Developing Volunteer Resources
August 15-16/Charlottesville

Reservist Training

Rapid Assessment Workbook Overview — July 8/Richmond

VEOC Tabletop Exercise
August 3/Richmond

VEOC Message/Mission Flow
August 4/Richmond

Info & Planning Branch PDA Team Deployment Exercise
August 9/Richmond

Search and Rescue

Basic SAR Dog Workshop
July 15-16/Mount Jackson

SAR Council
July 29/Richmond

SAR 1st Responder
August 12-13/Shenandoah County

Technological Hazards

Public Safety Response to Terrorism — Awareness
July 9/Waynesboro

Public Safety Response to Terrorism — Management Considerations
July 12-13/Amherst County

School Safety Training

EM Coordinator Workshops
July 11/Yorktown (York County Dept. of Fire and Life Safety)
July 25/Richmond (VDEM Tng Ctr)

Name Change (continued from page 1)

Emergency Operations Center with a round-the-clock communications and warning system to support all of Virginia's localities.

In the aftermath of a disaster, VDEM coordinates and administers federal and state disaster assistance and recovery programs in conjunction with the Federal Emergency Management Agency. As Virginia is most vulnerable to flooding and hurricanes, VDEM also emphasizes planning and strategies such as smart land use and building code enforcement to reduce or eliminate the effects of these threats.

The transition from VDES to VDEM presents a unique opportunity to enhance the visibility of the agency and its services. Along that line, we've developed a slogan to help market the good work it does for Virginians — *"Working to Protect People, Property and Our Communities."*

Starting Lineup (continued from page 3)

Big league move. Cindi Causey joined VDEM on June 26 as the agency's newest Regional Coordinator. Working out of the Culpeper office, she will act as a liaison between the state and localities in the north central and northwest third of the state.

Causey has served Stafford County since 1990 in several capacities beginning as a career paramedic. She was later promoted to EMS Supervisor to manage the career service and then named Deputy Coordinator of Emergency Services.

She has actively assisted VDEM with a variety of training and operational activities and served as a member of the reservist cadre since 1998.

A Certified Emergency Manager and Virginia Professional Emergency Manager, Causey holds an associate degree in emergency medical services and a bachelor's in public administration from George Mason University. She looks forward to putting her education and experience to work on a larger scale.

"My first priority is to get out and meet the local coordinators to learn more about their challenges and concerns," says Causey. "With a focus covering one third of the Commonwealth, I am looking forward to the challenge of reaching a whole new level of emergency management."

Get plugged in to the new VDEM

We're changing our Web and e-mail addresses to match our new name. Log on at www.vdem.state.va.us to see big changes. The site has a whole new look and an increased focus on functionality for internal and external users. Though expanded features are still under construction, users can immediately access our new staff e-mail addresses, library and weather links. An online EOC is also available for authorized users. Call PAO at (804) 897-6510 for more information.



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